

KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
TARIKH: 15 DISEMBER 2014 (ISNIN)

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KERATAN AKHBAR
THE MALAY MAIL (TOP NEWS) : MUKA SURAT 4
TARIKH : 15 DISEMBER 2014 (ISNIN)

Top News

MALAY MAIL Monday December 15, 2014

Consumers are claiming retailers are cheating them by selling 'half-full' cylinders, aside from the hiked prices of cooking gas. (Inset) A pressure gauge can only detect pressure and the content. — Picture by Zuraneza Zulkifli



“Weigh or report it,” consumers told over cooking gas cheats

PETALING JAYA — Consumers who have doubts on the quantity of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in their cooking gas cylinders should weigh their tanks before making their purchase.

Zainal Azhar Ahmad, an expert from the oil and gas industry, said all cylinders come with a cap removable only upon first use at home and it would be checked by the officials from the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry to ensure it is properly filled before leaving the refineries.

“But while stringent quality control is carried out by the authorities to ensure it conforms to the prescribed specifications before leaving the refineries, like any other item of commercial value, liquefied petroleum gas which is mainly used in cooking gas tanks can be siphoned by depots or dealers,” said Zainal, who has been in the industry for 32 years.

“Consumers should request to weigh the cylinders from the retailers before purchasing it if they have doubts if the content was not according to specifications.”

By Ida Nadirah
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Zainal said consumers can identify the total amount of the cylinder with its contents by adding up the weight of the tank, which is written on the top body, with the weight of the gas.

The weight of an empty cylinder for 12kg cooking gas is 15.8kg, while an empty cylinder for 14kg is 16.5kg.

On Saturday, Malay Mail reported that while the government has set the ceiling price at RM22.80 (12kg tank) and RM26.60 (14kg tank), retailers had been selling them above the ceiling price on top of delivery charges. Several consumers had also raised concerns if the amount of gas were that stated on the cylinders.

Zainal, however, said using add-on pressure gauge to check the percentage of content of the cylinder, is not advisable as the device is not certified by the Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia (Sirim).

“Some pressure gauges may carry the

Sirim certification; but my hunch is the majority are not. In any event regardless whether it has a Sirim certification, if it is used with LPG cylinders, it is not likely certified.

“The gas in the cylinders is in liquid form and is never full as it needs room for expansion. Gas is sold by weight and the add-on devices can detect pressure but it is not the accurate measurement on the content of the cylinders.”

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry secretary general Datuk Seri Alias Ahmad said any suspicion of cheating should be reported to the ministry.

“If a retailer is found cheating consumers, the ministry can take action under the Weights and Measurements Act 1972,” he said.

He said a person found guilty for the offence jailed for up to three years, fined up to RM4,000 or both.

Alias had warned retailers who sell cooking gas above the ceiling price will see their licences revoked under the Control of Supplies Act 1961.

Sea of opportunities

Long harvested for use in the food industry, red seaweed is now being turned into pulp for making, among various things, paper. >2

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Red gold: Red seaweed being collected off the coast of El Jadida, about 100km south-west of Casablanca, Morocco. - AFP

By ALLAN KOAY
Photos by ONG SOON HIN
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New uses for seaweed

THE Algae Research Lab in Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, smells like the sea. The salty odour and pungent scent of sea vegetation hang in the air like a cloud raised straight from the oceans. It's testament to the important work being done there over the past few years.

In a corner of the room are several contraptions that, together, resemble a mini-factory line. And they are, indeed, just that. The machines, all manufactured in South Korea, are for making pulp from a species of red seaweed, or red algae, also known by its scientific name, gelidium.

Prof Dr Phang Siew Moi, director of the university's Institute Of Ocean And Earth Sciences, and her colleagues and students

A Universiti Malaya research project is paving the way for commercial production of pulp from seaweed.

have been researching the properties of red algae as well as its capacity for being turned into pulp and bioethanol. They have brought the red algae, native to South Korea, to Malaysia to see if it can be successfully cultivated in our climate. All this is with the view to creating a viable seaweed pulp and bioethanol industry, a green endeavour with

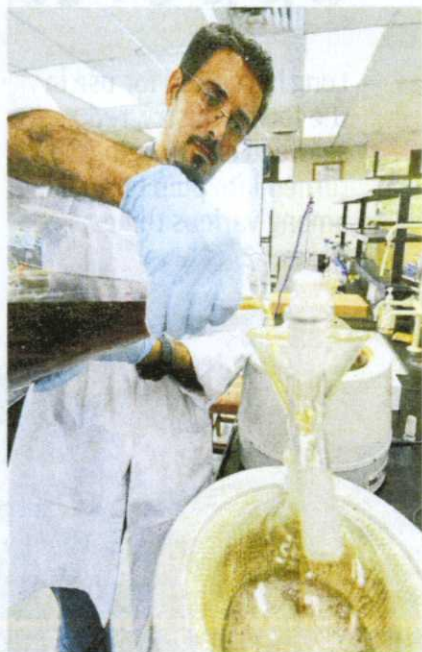
huge commercial potential.

"Our first objective was to see whether we could introduce this Korean species here and mass-cultivate it," said Phang, who is leading the project together with her colleague, Datin Seri Prof Dr Aishah Salleh. "The second objective was then to see whether we could produce paper from the fibres, and

to produce bioethanol from the agar."

Seaweed is known to absorb far larger quantities of carbon dioxide than land plants, and the process by which pulp is produced from it is far more environmentally friendly than the process of making wood pulp.

"You save on energy and the use of chemicals," Phang explained. "For wood pulp, you need to cook it at 180°C for eight hours, and you need to add sodium hydroxide. To get pulp from red seaweed, you only need to cook it at 100°C for two hours, and you use



It will be a few years yet before red seaweed can be used to produce bioethanol.



Studying seaweeds: Universiti Malaya's team that researched how red seaweed could be turned into pulp to make paper and bioethanol, (from left) Prof Dr Phang Siew Moi, Assoc Prof Lim Phaik Eem, PhD student Mohd J. Hessami and Dr Yeong Hui Yin. (Right) The different types of gelidium seaweed.

